

Renewable Energy

December 9, 2010

SOLAR

The BLM initiated a joint Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) in 2009 with the Department of Energy (DOE) to assess the environmental, social, and economic impacts associated with solar energy development on BLM public lands in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

As part of that effort, BLM Colorado identified four Solar Energy Areas in the San Luis Valley totaling 21,000 acres to assess their potential for large-scale solar projects. A public meeting for the draft PEIS is tentatively scheduled in March 2011 in Alamosa.

GEOTHERMAL

In November, BLM Colorado leased an 800-acre geothermal parcel in Chaffee County to 3E Geothermal, LLC in Colorado Springs during its quarterly oil, gas and geothermal lease sale. The lease sale earned \$29,600 in total proceeds, with 49 percent to go to the State of Colorado. A lease is the first step for a company or individual before eventually applying to develop and produce geothermal resources. Additional planning, environmental analysis and public input must occur before drilling can begin.

The Gunnison Field Office received two nominations for geothermal parcels in the Gunnison Basin. The field office is working on an environmental assessment to address if geothermal leasing is appropriate and under what conditions. The first block includes 4,586 acres of BLM land and 400 acres of private land with subsurface federal minerals. The second block includes about 3,765 acres of U.S. Forest Service land.

BLM Colorado and the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have developed a stipulation and a lease notice to prevent potential injury to senior water right users and protect existing geothermal features. The BLM is also working with the state to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to address areas of overlapping concerns related to both leasing and permitting.

TRANSMISSION

New electric transmission lines are being proposed in Colorado to accommodate additional electricity generation capacity for the next several decades, including new renewable generation, improved reliability to reduce congestion on the grid.

Right-of-way electric transmission applications within the state include:

- Energy Gateway South, a PacifiCorp (dba Rocky Mountain Power) project, is a 350-400 mile 500 kV AC transmission project from Medicine Bow, Wyoming to Clover, Utah. The BLM is the lead agency on this multi-agency project. Public scoping meetings are scheduled early 2011 in Colorado. When completed, this project will transmit up to 3,000 megawatts of electricity.



- TransWest Express, a TransWest Express, LLC project, is a 725-mile 600kV DC transmission project from south central Wyoming to southeast Las Vegas. The BLM is the lead agency on this multi-agency project. Public scoping meetings are scheduled for early 2011 in Colorado. The Draft EIS is estimated to be published summer 2012.

WIND

Although several wind energy testing applications and authorizations exist in Colorado, there are no commercial wind facilities on public lands in the state.

HYDRO

A total of 251 potential BLM sites were identified and assessed for hydropower potential in Colorado. These sites are predicted to have capacities ranging from 0.5 kilowatts to 125 megawatts, with most sites having capacities less than 5 megawatts (2005 data).